Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Informal and free - most used child care

Use of child care remains much the same as 1993 according to survey figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

In March 1996, 48 per cent (1,501,800) children aged less than 12 years used some type of child care. This proportion changed only slightly since 1993 when it was 49 per cent and continues the reduction in the use of care since the peak of 52 per cent in 1990.

Twenty per cent (624,400) of children used formal care in 1996, an increase from 18 per cent in 1990. Informal care remained, however, the most frequently used child care arrangement by Australian families with 1,128,300 (36 per cent) being cared for, mainly by relatives other than brothers or sisters and mostly at no financial cost to parents.

The most commonly used formal care was pre-school (32 per cent), followed by long day care (28 per cent), before and after school care programs (18 per cent) and family day care (15 per cent).

Reasons for using child care varied by the type of care used. While most school age children were in care because of the work-related reasons of their parents, when it came to pre-school most attended because parents felt it was beneficial for the child.

In general, as family income increased the proportion of children who used care also increased. For children in families with a weekly family income of less than $400, 43 per cent used some form of care, compared with 75 per cent of children in families with a weekly family income over $2,000.

The Childcare Cash Rebate (CCR) was claimed for 278,600 children using formal and/or informal care. This represented a take-up rate of 56 per cent of those eligible. The take-up rate for the CCR increased with income. Families with weekly incomes of $1,500 to $1,999 had the highest take-up rate of 70 per cent while families with incomes less than $400 had the lowest rate of 44 per cent.

At work mothers were more likely to make use of particular workplace arrangements to care for children than fathers (69 per cent compared with 26 per cent). Flexible working hours were the most frequently used option for both parents.

Details are in **Child Care, Australia** (cat. no. 4402.0) which is available from ABS bookshops.

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